

Sūrah Inshiqāq

Central Theme and Relationship with the Preceding Sūrah

There exists an obvious meaningful relationship between this *sūrah* and the previous one: Sūrah Muṭaffifīn. Just as the rejecters of reward and punishment are warned in the previous *sūrah*, they are cautioned and prodded in this *sūrah* too. It was stated in the previous *sūrah* that a day will definitely come when the Almighty will divide people in separate groups on the basis of their faith and deeds. Those who had remained obedient to him and were pious would be blessed with an eternal kingdom; on the other hand, those who remained defiant and disobedient to Him will face eternal humiliation. This *sūrah* also mentions that people will be divided into two groups: one of them will be handed over their accounts in their right hands and they will receive eternal success and the other will be handed over their accounts from behind into their left hands and they will face everlasting disgrace.

Both *sūrahs* address the affluent and wealthy sections of the society who were caught in the notion that there will be no day of reward and punishment in the first place, and if it ever comes they will be recipients of honour and status on that day just as they are blessed with them in this world. They are told that man's nature is not devoid of the awareness of justice and the Almighty has not made this world without a purpose. Therefore, it is essential that a day come in which the righteous are sorted out from the wrongdoers. On that day, those who lead their lives whilst ignoring this obvious reality will be doomed.

The basis of reasoning in the previous *sūrah* is human nature, as is explained in its *tafsīr*, and, in this *sūrah*, this reasoning is based on certain signs of the physical world.

Analysis of the Discourse

Following is the sequence adopted in the discourse:

Verses (1-5): A brief mention of the cataclysm that will take place in the heavens and in the earth at the advent of the Day of Judgement and an explanation of the fact that on that day neither the heavens will dare disobey the Almighty nor the earth. Both will obey their Lord without any hesitation whatsoever and this attitude is but befitting for them. When God has created them, it is their obligation towards Him to obey Him.

Verses (6-15): Man is rebuked that he is being relentlessly pulled to encounter His Lord and meet his fate. On that day, people whose account is given in their right hands will have an easy reckoning and will happily meet their people. However, those who regarded this world to be their real destination and led a life of indifference to their actual destination will be in trouble. They will be handed down their accounts from behind. At every step, they will be faced with doom and perdition.

Verses (16-21): Evidence is presented from some physical phenomena of this world to show that everything in this world progresses gradually and everything at all times is in the grasp of God. Man too is gradually moving forward to meet his Lord and one day he will have to face Him. If he is not accepting this verdict of the Qur'ān, then it is only his foolishness.

Verses (22-25): People who are adamant in rejecting the Qur'ān are warned and those who have embraced faith and are doing righteous deeds after affirming the warnings of the Qur'ān are given glad tidings.

Text and Translation

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ (١) وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (٢) وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ (٣) وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ (٤) وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (٥) يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ (٦) فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ (٧) فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسَبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا (٨) وَينْقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا (٩) وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوْتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ (١٠) فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُو ثُبُورًا (١١) وَيَصْلَىٰ سَعِيرًا (١٢) إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا (١٣) إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَن لَّنْ يَحُورَ (١٤) بَلَىٰ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ بَصِيرًا (١٥) فَلَا أَقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ (١٦) وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ (١٧) وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (١٨) لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَن طَبَقٍ (١٩) فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٠) وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ (٢١) بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يَكْذِبُونَ (٢٢) وَاللَّهُ أَغْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ (٢٣) فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٤) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ (٢٥)

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Ever Merciful

When the sky is rent asunder and obeys its Lord's command and this only is befitting for it. And when the earth is stretched out and casts out all things within it and becomes empty and obeys its Lord and this is what it should do. (1-5)

O Man! You also are being dragged relentlessly towards your Lord and

are going to meet Him. Then he whose record is given to him in his right hand will receive an easy reckoning, and he will go back to his people rejoicing. As for he whose record is handed out to him from behind his back, he will call for death and shall enter Hell. He remained engrossed among his kinfolk. He thought that he would never have to return. Yes, why not? His Lord was fully watching over him. (6-15)

Therefore, this is not so. I swear by the glow of the sunset, and the night and the objects it envelops, and the moon when it grows full that you shall certainly ascend gradually. (16-19)

So what has come over them that they are not professing faith, and when the Qur'ān is recited before them they do not fall down in prostration! In fact those who have disbelieved are denying; and Allah knows full well what they are accumulating. So give them glad tidings of a painful torment. For those, however, who accepted faith and did righteous deeds there is eternal reward. (20-25)

Text and Explanation

إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ (١) وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (٢)¹

The new world which will be created after the Day of Judgement will have new physical laws; the existing world of these heavens and the earth will be annihilated before this happens, as is alluded to in the Qur'ān.²

The words إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ convey the same meanings as the words إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انْفَطَرَتْ (٨٢:١) of Sūrah Infiṭār do. Today it is not possible to estimate the nature of this greatest turmoil that will ever take place in his universe. The Qur'ān has mentioned this upheaval to alarm those foolish and naïve people who were very proud of their fortresses and palaces. They were not being able to comprehend how such strong structures would be dented. They are informed that the very heavens and the earth in which they have built their palaces, edifices, fortresses and castles would be destroyed what to speak of these structures themselves.

In the expression وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ the words لَهُ أَذِنَ mean لَهُ إِسْتَمَعَ (he accepted what he said; he obeyed his directive).

The words لَهُ حَقٌّ mean that it is essential for it to do this; it is befitting

1. When the sky is rent asunder and obeys its Lord's command and this only is befitting for it.

2. Reference is to the following verse:

يَوْمَ تُبَدَّلُ الْأَرْضُ غَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَاوَاتُ (٤٨:١٤)

Keep in mind the day when the earth is changed into a different earth and the heavens also. (14:48)

for it to carry out this task.

The implication is that people should come out of their ignorant attitude of regarding the heavens and the earth as invincible. On that day, they will be reduced to pieces at the behest of their Lord. They will be asked by their God and they will obey Him without any hesitation whatsoever. The words *وَحُقَّتْ* mean that it is essential for it to do so. When the Almighty has created it, how is it becoming for the sky to disobey its Creator.

These sentences are meant to admonish and instruct these conceited elements who were ready to engage in a heated discussion on every point. They are warned instantaneously that the sky will be shattered to pieces at the behest of its Lord and this is truly befitting of it; the naïve who are only a trivial speck below this sky should contemplate how the attitude they have adopted can be regarded as correct: they have the false notion that no one would be able to displace them from their places when they would get up to fight God.

وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ (٣) وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ (٤) وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ (٥)³

After the skies, a mention is now made of what will happen to the earth. The implication is that whilst today in this world this earth is uneven; it has many peaks and valleys, highlands and lowlands, seas and mountains and there are several things which are hidden in its crests and troughs and folds; however, on that day this earth will be stretched out like a sheet of cloth and it will expel whatever is hidden in its folds; this reference is specially to raising of the dead, but the style adopted is general. It includes everything that is buried in it including the treasures of the affluent who are specially addressed in this *sūrah*.

The expression *وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا وَتَخَلَّتْ* (and casts out all things within her and becomes empty) also gives the impression that the earth is burdened with all these things just as a pregnant lady is burdened with the child she is carrying. Consequently, it will feel the same relief in shedding its burden as is felt by a pregnant lady once she has given birth.

The verse *وَأَذْنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ* (and obeys its Lord and this is what it should do) has already been explained above. It shows that both the sky and the earth will obey their Lord on that day and it is only befitting for them to do so. They will show obedience out of their own free will. At another place in the Qur'ān, this obedience of the sky and earth is mentioned thus: (١١:٤١) فَقَالَ لَهَا وَلِلْأَرْضِ ائْتِيَا طَوْعًا أَوْ كَرْهًا قَالَتَا أَتَيْنَا طَائِعِينَ (He said to the sky and to the earth: "Come forward both, willingly or

3. And when the earth is stretched out and casts out all things within her and becomes empty and obeys its Lord and this is what it should do.

unwillingly.” They replied: “We are here willingly.” (41:11))

يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ (٦)⁴

Although the address of this *sūrah* is general, however, it is specifically directed at the conceited people who were deeply engrossed in this world and oblivious of the Hereafter. Whether they are aware of it or not, they are being inexorably pulled towards their Lord and one day they will be going to face Him.

The devotees and disciples of this world, being inebriated with their worldly successes, always tend to forget their real destination. Triumph after triumph and success after success engages and absorbs them so much that they are not able to reflect on anything outside this sphere. So occupied are they in their dash to go one after another achievement that they do not even get the time to reflect on what their real destination is. They regard some accomplishment of this world to be their final destination whereas the final destination is the Hereafter. Bound by the law of God, everyone is very helplessly moving towards it. If this aspect of life had also caught their attention, they would never have deviated from the right path; they would have in fact clearly seen that they are progressing towards accountability with a speed much greater than the one with which they are moving to their coveted worldly goals,

The word كَدَحَ means “to make an effort in something with full great labour.” It very subtly conveys the fact that from the very day a person is born he starts his journey to his final destination set by God: death. This journey continues without any break. Whether the climate is harsh or easy, whether a person is sick or healthy and whether the circumstances are tough or smooth, this journey continues inexorably. Various phases from birth to death like childhood, youth, middle age and old age are encountered but this cycle never stops for a second. So tightly is man in the grip of the law of providence that even if he does not want to traverse this terrain he cannot resist it. The rich and the poor, the noble and the lowly, the ruler and the ruled and the pious and the impious are equally helpless before it.

The word فَمُلَاقِيهِ refers to the purpose of this journey. Man will not be allowed to go unaccountable in this world; hence it is essential that all people move inexorably to meet their Lord. The purpose of this meeting is obviously to hold them accountable for their deeds, which was the very objective for which this world had been created. Consequently, the

4. O Man! You also are being dragged relentlessly towards your Lord and are going to meet Him.

succeeding verses bring up the details.

فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ (٧) فَسَوْفَ يُحَاسِبُ حِسَابًا يَسِيرًا (٨)⁵

These verses elaborate on what is discussed earlier. The implication is that handing over their account to them in their right hand would be guarantee enough for making them entitled to salvation. Their good deeds outnumber their evil ones and they are worthy of forgiveness. It is evident from this that they too should be called to account; however, their good deeds will carry more weight and therefore their minor blemishes will be ignored. On the other hand, those whose evil deeds will carry more weight will be held accountable for each and every deed of theirs and will have to bear their punishment.

وَيَنْقَلِبُ إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا (٩)⁶

This verse comprehensively states their reward. There are a number of self-obvious things which are encompassed in this style:

-- The Almighty will unite them in Paradise with the believers among their families even though these family members may not deserve the high status these people had become worthy of. This will be done so that all members of the family are able to enjoy the pleasures of Paradise by living at the same place. It has already been explained in the twenty first verse of Sūrah Tūr that for this union the Almighty will not lessen their status; He will in fact upgrade the status of their family.

-- Such people had not spent their lives with their family while remaining indifferent to their fate in the Hereafter; they always were more concerned about that their family achieving success in the Hereafter than in this world. In the previous *sūrah*, the attitude of people who were indifferent to the Hereafter is depicted by saying that when they would be with their family, they would be very happy and would contend that these blessings of life will always remain with them. The words are: (٣١:٨٣) وَإِذَا انْقَلَبُوا إِلَىٰ أَهْلِهِمْ انْقَلَبُوا فَكِهِينَ (When they return to their own folk they return rejoicing, (83:31)). On the other hand, when people who believed in the Hereafter would be happy at being united with their family are stated in the following verse of Sūrah Tūr to express these sentiments : قَالَوَا إِنَّا كُنَّا قَبْلُ فِي أَهْلِنَا مُشْفِقِينَ فَمَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا وَوَقَانَا (٢٦-٢٧) عَذَابَ السَّمُومِ (They will say: “We were fearful of [the fate of] our family. So God has been gracious to us; He has preserved us from

5. Then he whose record is given to him in his right hand will receive an easy reckoning.

6. And he will go back to his people rejoicing.

the fiery scourge, (52:26-27)).

-- The real requirement of the love a person has for his family is that he should be concerned for their well-being in the Hereafter and also make them show concern on this issue. It is this concern which will afford him the real bliss of being united to them and of their love. If he loved his family such that both remained indifferent to the Hereafter, then this love will ultimately doom both of them and instead of rejoicing in the Hereafter both will curse one another.

وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ وَرَاءَ ظَهْرِهِ (١٠)⁷

This verse depicts the fate of the people who led their lives while being indifferent to the Hereafter. Their account will be handed to them in their left hands from behind their backs. Although there is no mention of the fact that their account will be handed over to them in their left hands, yet there is a strong contextual indication to this. It is mentioned earlier that the first group will be handed over their accounts in their right hands so that the good fortune which will befall them is evident from this.⁸ Moreover, in Sūrah Hāqqah, it is explicitly mentioned that their account will be handed over to them in their left hands: وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ (And he who is given his record in his left hand would say: “Would that I had not been given my record. (69:25))

If this verse is understood in the light of Sūrah Hāqqah, then it becomes evident that this group will face two humiliations at the same time. Firstly, their record will be handed over to them in their left hands. Secondly, instead of being given this record from in front, they will be handed it over from their backs. Further deliberation shows that like criminals their hands will be tied behind their backs.

فَسَوْفَ يَدْعُو ثُبُورًا (١١) وَيَصْلَى سَعِيرًا (١٢) إِنَّهُ كَانَ فِي أَهْلِهِ مَسْرُورًا (١٣)⁹

Earlier on it is mentioned that the believers will happily return to their kinfolk. In exact contrast, it is now mentioned that the other group will call for their own death and destruction. The implication is that when they enter Hell, the only option they will see before them to evade its torment will be that death should destroy them. Alas! death too would not be there to alleviate their misery.

7. As for he whose record is handed out to him from behind his back.

8. There seems to be a mistake by the author wherein he has mentioned the people of the left hand instead of those of the right hand.

9. He will call for death and shall enter Hell. He remained engrossed among his kinfolk.

Now, the sequence of verses should have been such that the words يَدْعُو (he will call for death) should have come after يَصْلَى سَعِيرًا (he shall enter the blazing fire of Hell); however, to make the discourse more forceful, the effect has been placed before the cause so that the good fortune of the first group and the misfortune of the second be mentioned in exact contrast.

The verse depicts that this group will be deprived of the delight of being united with their kinfolk because whatever pleasure they could derive from them they already did in the previous world. When in the previous world they were neither concerned for their own fate nor that of their kinfolk, how can they be entitled in the Hereafter to enjoy their company. It is essential that a person has made the requisite sacrifice if he is to benefit from any favour in the Hereafter.

إِنَّهُ ظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ يَحْجَرَ¹⁰ (١٤)

The implication is that they thought that after their death they would not be raised to life again nor return to anyone. When this was so, why should they have ruined the bliss of their worldly life. Whatever pleasure they could derive from worldly resources, they did; they neither were concerned of their fate in the Hereafter nor will they receive any share when they rise there.

بَلَىٰ إِنَّ رَبَّهُ كَانَ بِهِ بَصِيرًا¹¹ (١٥)

This is an immediate comment of rejection on their notion expressed above. The fact of the matter is that their Lord is watching over them; when this is a fact, then how is it even thinkable that He will not call them to His presence? This would have been against His power, wisdom, justice and mercy. At various places in the Qur'ān, this watching over by the Almighty of his creatures has been presented as an argument in favour of the Day of Judgement.

فَلَا أُفْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ (١٦) وَاللَّيْلِ وَمَا وَسَقَ (١٧) وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا اتَّسَقَ (١٨) لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ¹² (١٩)

Here, at the end, three things mentioned in the form of oaths are

10. He thought that he would never have to return.

11. Yes, why not? His Lord was fully watching over him.

12. Therefore, this is not so. I swear as witness the glow of the sunset, and the night and the objects it envelops, and the moon when it grows full that you shall certainly ascend gradually.

presented as evidence to substantiate the premise mentioned earlier in verse six: “O man! You also are being dragged relentlessly towards your Lord and are going to meet Him.” The *muqsam* ‘*alayh* of these oaths is verse nineteen: you shall certainly ascend gradually. This, in other words, means that it is certain for every person to meet his Lord; however, this will be done gradually. The reason for this is that in this universe, it is the unalterable practice of God that everything here reaches its culmination in a gradual manner.

While keeping in view this summary, let us analyze the individual parts of the discourse.

In the verse فَلَا أُقْسِمُ بِالشَّفَقِ لَا the particle of negation لَا is mentioned in much the same way as it is in the first verse of Sūrah Qiyāmah (٧٥: ١) لَا أُقْسِمُ بِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ as well as in many other oaths. I have explained many a time that this particle is neither superfluous nor is it meant to refute the oath; it is in fact meant to refute in advance a false claim of the addressees which is intended to be negated by the oath itself. The efficacy in this style is that the speaker does not even wait to refute the false claim of his addressees by first presenting an argument and then refuting it; he, on the contrary, begins his speech with a refutation. This is a very natural style and is found in all well-known languages of the world.

First an oath is sworn by the glow of the sunset and then by the night and what it envelops. It is this reddish glow which becomes a prelude to the night. As long as it stays, evening remains. It then gradually fades away and night envelops the world.

In the expression وَمَا وَسَقَ (and the objects it envelops), an oath is sworn by things which the night envelops. Lexicographers explain it by saying: مَا جَمَعَ ie things which the night gathers in it.¹³ Generally, our exegetes have regarded this to refer to animals because they take refuge in the night for taking rest; some others have regarded it to refer to rivers, mountains and trees since the night enshrouds them. The question arises however of the relationship of these things with the *muqsam* ‘*alayh* because oaths are sworn to substantiate what is mentioned as the *muqsam* ‘*alayh*. For this reason, to me this refers to the stars which appear at night and which embellish the night. Firstly, stars are specifically related to nightfall and as such the expression وَمَا وَسَقَ is a very apt description of them. Secondly, the Qur’ān, at various places, has presented their appearing and setting, coming and going, kneeling and prostrating to bear evidence to the fact that they are in subjugation to the Almighty: they appear at His behest, then they gradually rise on a prescribed path and then gradually start to disappear until they turn towards their Creator. It was at

13. Ibn Manzūr, *Lisān al-‘arab*, vol. 10, 380.

the command of this Creator that they appear. In other words, in them is a clear evidence of the tremendous grasp of the law of God mentioned in the verse: إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا (O Man! You also are being dragged relentlessly towards your Lord and are going).

The verse وَالْقَمَرَ إِذَا اكْتَسَقَ (and the moon when it grows full) is a mention of the specific after the general. The words وَمَا وَسَقَ encompass the stars and all heavenly bodies whether moving or stationary. Here, in this verse, one specific heavenly body – the moon is selected as their outstanding representative and its waxing and waning is emphatically presented for a certain reason. As per this reason, no other thing highlights what is stated in verses six and nineteen¹⁴ to the extent the moon does. Consequently, in Sūrah Yāsīn, the Qur'ān has specifically underscored this aspect of the moon thus: وَالْقَمَرَ قَدَرْنَاهُ مَنَازِلَ حَتَّىٰ عَادَ كَالْعُرْجُونِ الْقَدِيمِ (36:39) (We have ordained phases for the moon, passing through which it ultimately appears like a withered twig of a date-palm. (36:39))

The expression means إِذَا اكْتَسَقَ when the moon grows into a full moon. Attention is focused on its gradual progress; it does not dare deviate from its prescribed cycle and once it reaches its zenith, it does not have the authority to remain there. It has to once again gradually begin its downward journey and it cannot escape doing so.

The expression لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ (you shall certainly ascend gradually) is the *muqṣam* 'alayh of these oaths. The implication is that just as all these things are governed by a divine law and travelling towards God, and similarly man too after passing through various phases is moving inescapably towards the Almighty. It is neither possible that he remains where he is nor possible that he goes to some other destination. His journey may be gradual – a practice of God found in all phenomena of nature – but he is sure to reach this destination. It is thus only befitting for him to not make haste nor deny the Hereafter on the basis that he was not given a glimpse of it at his demand.

فَمَا لَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ (٢٠)¹⁵

This is an expression of wonder at their state: They must have really lost their senses if after all these blatant signs they are not professing faith in the Hereafter and reward and punishment.

14. Verse six reads: يَا أَيُّهَا الْإِنْسَانُ إِنَّكَ كَادِحٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَدْحًا فَمُلَاقِيهِ (O Man! You also are being dragged relentlessly towards your Lord and are going). Verse nineteen reads: لَتَرْكَبُنَّ طَبَقًا عَنْ طَبَقٍ (you shall certainly ascend gradually).

15. So what has come over them that they are not professing faith?

وَإِذَا قُرِئَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقُرْآنُ لَا يَسْجُدُونَ (٢١)¹⁶

The implication of this verse is that when the Qur'ān is informing them of this great fact, it was only befitting for them to have fallen down in prostration before the Almighty whenever it would be recited to them. This would have reflected their gratitude of acknowledging the greatness of the Qur'ān and of the great news it was giving them; on the contrary, their attitude is the direct opposite: they are arrogantly denying it.

Here worth considering the fact is a tradition of the Arabs and the Egyptians: when they wanted to acknowledge the greatness and veracity of someone's discourse, they would bow down in prostration as soon as they would observe it or listen to it. The magicians whom the Pharaoh had gathered to contest Moses (sws) had acknowledged the veracity of his message and the grandness of his miracles in a similar manner. Famous contemporary poets of the Prophet's times in Arabia while acknowledging a couplet of the eminent Arab poet Labīd bowed down in prostration before him and it was on this basis that his poetical composition was hung in the Baytullāh and that he came to be regarded as the "king of poets" of those times. Obviously, the Qur'ān is way ahead in its veracity and literary efficacy than all these things; however, people who were unaware of its value and worth, instead of prostrating before it, showed arrogance and made fun of it.

بَلِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا يُكَذِّبُونَ (٢٢)¹⁷

This is a portrayal of the practical state of affairs: the disbelievers were rejecting the Qur'ān what to speak of prostrating before it. They contending that it has been fabricated by the person who is presenting it and he in fact wants to overawe them by intimidating them about the Hereafter.

وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يُوعُونَ (٢٣)¹⁸

The implication is that the Almighty knows fully well the pebbles they are accumulating after rejecting this pearl. The immediate gains of this world have led them to this attitude; alas! the reality of whatever they are accumulating is not known to them; only the Almighty is aware of it. It is only on the day when what they have accumulated will come before

16. And when the Qur'ān is recited before them they do not fall down in prostration!

17. In fact those who have disbelieved are denying!

18. And Allah knows full well what they are accumulating.

them that they will realize what they threw away and what they gathered. The generality found in the words بِمَا يُوعُونَ includes the wealth they have gathered as well as their deeds and the consequences of these deeds which will necessarily come before them; however, their real awareness will come to them in the Hereafter and not in this world.

فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ (٢٤) إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ أَجْرٌ غَيْرُ مَمْنُونٍ (٢٥)¹⁹

The implication is that if these people, being caught in love of this world, do not have the courage to adopt the path prescribed to them by the Qur'ān, then the Prophet (sws) should give them glad tidings of a painful doom – a fate they deserve because of their misdeeds.

In other words, if they are not ready to hear the good news of salvation, then the Prophet (sws) should announce to them the good news of torment. Only those people will be saved from this torment who profess faith and do righteous deeds – the very message towards which the Qur'ān is calling them. For such people indeed, there shall be eternal reward.

With the grace of God, this brings us to the end of this *sūrah's tafsīr*. السعي مني والإتمام من الله وبيده الفضل كله وهو على كل شيء قدير (I can only strive [for a task] and it is up to the Almighty to bring [it] to completion and all blessings are in His hands and He has power over all things.

Rahmānabad

10th September 1979 AD

17th Shawwāl 1399 AH

19. So give them glad tidings of a painful torment. For those, however, who accepted faith and did righteous deeds there is eternal reward.